



# UP FRONT

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

## Supporting a New Generation in the New Year

**A**gainst the backdrop of an anxious world, I visited Italy last month with a coalition of international students interested in manufacturing engineering technologies.

They came from the US, Mexico, Brazil, Russia and Iran, courtesy of the Italian Trade Agency, to learn about manufacturing technologies in Italy. It was the kind of coming together that helps to restore some confidence in the world, and in our ability to work together, as global industry often requires.

Italy is Europe's second-largest exporter of manufacturing technologies, and the machines and equipment produced there are regarded as premium, quality products. While that made the visit especially interesting to me, it was also heartening to see the excitement of students who are interested in topics such as laser systems, automation, and lean strategies as they saw technologies in action.

I spent much of my trip with Jena Kreuzer, Daniel Nix, Matthew Goelz and David Kriesberg, a group of US engineering students who are interested in making the world a better place. Over a pizza dinner in Milan, for example, Daniel explained how he is working on autonomous mobile technologies for use in wheelchairs. It's an effort to

help people with diseases such as multiple sclerosis who struggle to control a joystick to be able to navigate through, say, a doorway without incident. Currently, "a lot of people have accidents," he told me.

Being in rare supply, all of these students were quite aware that they have a bright future ahead. It was stated best by Prof. Duane Abata of the South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, who joined us on the tour: "Our students are in very high demand and are offered very high salaries, often before they graduate."

Which brings me to our annual 30 Under 30 issue, which honors young people in STEM and manufacturing. Now in its fourth year, the program seems more important than ever. Our world faces many challenges that manufacturing professionals will play a key role in solving. We need to help build the next generation by supporting the young people who do pursue this challenging, often misunderstood career path.

We are now accepting applications for candidates for this special issue at [www.sme.org/30under30](http://www.sme.org/30under30). Please take a moment to start the year off right, by nominating a young person you know. ➔

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